

Recent Activities in the National Cancer Control Program in Korea and Relations with Asia

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Introduction

Cancer has been the leading cause of death in Korea since 1983. The burden of cancer in Korea will be a greater issue in the near future considering Korea's rapidly aging society.

Background

The Korean government established the first 10-year cancer control plan (1996-2005). The National Cancer Center, founded in 2000, has been playing a key role in formulating and implementing national cancer control programs such as the development of the cancer prevention program and national cancer screening guidelines. The Korean Cancer Registry Program covers approximately 90% of new cancer cases in Korea. The population-based cancer registries now cover approximately 50% of the Korean population.

Purpose and Activities

For primary cancer prevention activities, Korea is enforcing several anti-cancer activities such as 'cancer prevention day' for public awareness, ten codes and practical guidelines for cancer risk reduction, standardized information on cancer prevention, carrying prevention education and campaign, developing policies and program for tobacco control, strategic plan for prevention of cancer caused by infection, and making surveillance for occupational exposure on carcinogens. The National Cancer Screening Program now supports cancer screening of the five major cancers among 40 years or older medical aids and National Health Insurance beneficiaries for the lower 50 percent contribution for free, which covers about 56% of the entire population. In 2007, the target population of the NCSP was more than 7.1 million persons, and about 1.9 million people participated in cancer screening, which had a 23.9 % participation rate. For terminal stage cancer patients, the Korean government provides hospice and palliative care programs. As for supportive program, the Cancer Patients Financial Aid Program was established.

Results and Conclusions

Based on the concerted efforts to reduce cancer burden in Korea, there has been a significant reduction in both stomach cancer and liver cancer mortality and tremendous improvement in cancer survival rates for certain cancers. Korea started a second term plan for Cancer Control (2006-2015), and according to this plan, Korea will establish infrastructures for cancer control, promote cancer research, and extending national cancer control programs. In addition, the National Cancer Center was designated as a WHO collaborating center for developing capacity on cancer registration, prevention and early detection in July 2005, and is expected to attribute continuously to the global action against cancer in Asia.